

3-16-09
GAE

Subject: Opposition to Bill No. 839 Sec. 14 concerning the Children's Trust Fund
Importance: High

To the Honorable Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Governor Rell's proposal to abolish the Children's Trust Fund (CTF), contained in Bill No. 839 An Act Concerning Mergers and Consolidations of Various State Agencies, specifically its section 14, directed to Section 17a-50 of the general statutes). Although the bill contains a provision for transferring some of the current functions of the CTF to the Department of Children and Families, the likelihood that these programs would be able to survive unchanged is virtually nil.

The Children's Trust Fund was founded with a mandate to PREVENT child abuse and neglect, in contrast to DCF's requirement to intervene in situations that already threaten the well-being of the child. Under the able leadership of Karen Foley-Schain, the CTF has developed innovative outreach programs to families at risk. Families welcome the programs, including home visitors, because they are perceived as a support, not a threat (as is DCF). In addition to providing an important immediate support for families, the programs of the CTF also save the state money by reducing the eventual caseload for DCF, as well as creating savings in school remediation, mental health services, and the correctional system.

Given the successes of the Children's Trust Fund, it is difficult to imagine why Governor Rell has targeted it for elimination. I hope that you will defeat this misguided proposal, and instead support the Consolidation bill currently under consideration by the Appropriations Committee.

Sincerely,

Sara Harkness, Ph.D, M.P.H.
53 Dugg Hill Rd.
Woodstock, CT 06281
Tel. (860) 963-7327
(Professor of Human Development,
Pediatrics, Public Health and Anthropology,
University of Connecticut)